Wild Turkeys

Turkeys were introduced into California about 100 years ago, and have since become well-established in many parts of the state, including the Bay Area. Turkeys live in woodland habitats which contain both trees for roosting, and open grasslands for foraging and nesting. Local turkey populations have increased in size in recent years, with some flocks containing thirty or more birds. Turkeys are ground feeders, and consume a wide variety of foods including grasses, grains, fruits, acorns, insects, and agricultural crops. In particular, their fondness for acorns may hinder oak regeneration in areas where they are common.

Many residents enjoy seeing these impressive birds, but they have become a nuisance in some suburban areas due to the damage they can cause by foraging in gardens and landscaping, and the droppings they leave behind. In many cases, these problems are caused or exacerbated by residents who feed the turkeys and thereby attract them to developed areas. Far from being a kindness, feeding wild turkeys actually puts them in jeopardy by altering their wild behavior and encouraging close contact with people. The most important way to help keep turkey populations healthy and wild is to refrain from feeding them. If turkeys begin roosting in your trees or causing damage to your property and you need more help, the California Department of Fish and Game can provide specific advice.

